



Call to worship based on Psalm 37:5-6

Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

We come with joy, finding our delight in the presence of our God.

Commit everything you do to the Lord. Trust him, and he will help you.

We place our lives in your hands, trusting in your faithfulness and love.

Let us worship the Lord with gladness, for he is our refuge and strength!

With hearts full of praise, we lift our voices, Amen.

Hymn StF 148 Come, let us with our Lord arise

<https://youtu.be/tvvr6TG7RX4?si=7D5RWBA124erejiV>

Come, let us with our Lord arise,
Our Lord, Who made both earth and skies;
Who died to save the world He made,
And rose triumphant from the dead;
He rose, the Prince of life and peace,
And stamped the day for ever His.

'This is the day the Lord hath made'
That all may see His love displayed,
May feel His resurrection's power,
And live again to fall no more;
Their heart and mind and will renewed,
And filled with all the life of God.

Then let us render Him His own,
With solemn prayer approach the throne,
With meekness hear the Gospel word,
With thanks His dying love record;
Our joyful hearts and voices raise,
And fill His courts with songs of praise.

Honour and praise to Jesus pay
Throughout His consecrated day;
Be all in Jesus' praise employed,
Nor leave a single moment void;
With utmost care the time improve,
And only breathe His praise and love.

Prayer of Adoration

Glorious God, we come before you, to worship and adore.

You have brought us from warm, comfortable beds,
The fantastic smell of bacon and the crunch of breakfast cereals.
You have brought us with friends and companions to the door of your house;
You have welcomed us in to gather as your family:

Glorious God, we come before you, to worship and adore.

All the world is yours, the pleasures of home, and the beauty of creation,
The impulse deep within us to seek your face.

Together we praise you for such a privilege,
To learn about you, pray to you, sing to you, share our lives with you,
The Creator of the world, the God of abundant life:

Glorious God, we come before you, to worship and adore.

Prayer of Confession

When we are cold and unforgiving, bearing grudges and nursing old wounds:

Mercy incarnate, forgive.

When we plan revenge in little spiteful ways and think nobody sees:

Mercy incarnate, forgive.

When we keep our distance and make enemies of friends:

Mercy incarnate, forgive.

Joseph said to his brothers: 'Come closer to me. And they came closer. When we refuse to do the same:

Mercy incarnate, forgive.

Jesus said: 'Forgive, and you will be forgiven.' Take all the unforgiveness stored in our hearts.

Silence

Mercy incarnate, forgive.

Bible Reading

Genesis 45:1-5 (NRSV)

Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out, 'Send everyone away from me.' So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it. Joseph said to his brothers, 'I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?' But his brothers could not answer him, so dismayed were they at his presence. Then Joseph said to his brothers, 'Come closer to me.' And they came closer. He said, 'I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life.

Luke 6: 27-38 (NRSV)

'But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you. 'If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

Hymn : StF 423 Forgive our sins as we forgive https://youtu.be/OqG_iQwqEOE?si=rnMhisjYcZ3D50nu

'Forgive our sins as we forgive,'
you taught us, Lord, to pray,
but you alone can grant us grace
to live the words we say.

In blazing light your cross reveals
the truth we dimly knew:
what trivial debts are owed to us,
how great our debt to you!

How can your pardon reach and bless
the unforgiving heart,
that broods on wrongs and will not let
old bitterness depart?

Lord, cleanse the depths within our souls,
and bid resentment cease;
then, bound to all in bonds of love,
our lives will spread your peace.

Reflection

Two friends were travelling together. Along the way, they had a disagreement, and one friend slapped the other. The friend who was slapped bent down and wrote in the sand: "My friend slapped me here."

Later, they were crossing a river. One friend slipped on a rock and fell into the water. The other friend quickly saved him. The rescued friend then carved into a rock: "My friend saved me here."

With surprise, the other friend asked, "Why did you write in the sand before, but now you're carving on a rock?"

The friend smiled and said, "When someone hurts us, we should write it in the sand so the wind can erase it. But when someone helps us, we should carve it in stone so it stays forever."

Once, the Old Testament scholar David Noel Freedman was asked if all Scripture could be summed up in a sentence. He thought a moment and answered, "There is forgiveness." The two readings, Joseph's Story and Jesus' teachings, clearly declare the message of forgiveness to us today.

We see Joseph's brothers, who sold him to the Ishmaelites 22 years ago, now kneeling before him and asking for food. Even though Joseph dribbled his brothers a little before revealing himself to them, he did not intend to get revenge.

The first thought I would like to highlight today is that forgiveness is an inner, personal act. Imagine Joseph's tears. He mourns his brothers' deep jealousy. He regrets his own pride when he boasted about their father's special love for him. He grieves missing Benjamin's wedding. He feels sorrow for his father, who spent years believing his beloved son was dead. He struggles with his identity—part Egyptian, part Hebrew. But most of all, he grieves the lost years of love.

Scottish Torah scholar Avivah Zornberg writes, "Each time he weeps, something opens up in him... His weeping is a release of deep pain, so strong that it finally makes him stop pretending."

We can choose forgiveness for ourselves without needing an apology from the person who hurt us. Suzanne Freedman, an expert in forgiveness research, explains: "Forgiveness cannot undo the harm or damage, but it helps us move forward, free

from anger, hatred, and resentment. It allows us to heal while still recognising that what happened was wrong, unfair, and deeply painful.”

In the end, forgiveness is not about erasing the past but about freeing ourselves from its hold. Like Joseph, we may carry deep wounds, but through forgiveness, we open the door to healing and restoration. It does not mean forgetting the pain or pretending the wrong never happened, but it allows us to move forward without being trapped by anger or resentment. True forgiveness brings freedom—not just for the one we forgive, but for ourselves.

Another thought I bring to you is that Forgiveness is interpersonal. Joseph says to his brothers, "Come closer to me." This is a clue or a step in the process of forgiveness, rebuilding the relationship. Forgiveness is not a passive process; it is an action-oriented process. Norwegian theology professor Ole Modalsli explains that when God forgives the one who wronged someone, He comes close to the victim. At the same time, God invites the wrongdoer to use their freedom as a forgiven person to take responsibility for the harm they caused. The goal of this process is to reverse the roles. The victim no longer feels the guilt, shame, and burden caused by the wrongdoer, and the wrongdoer acknowledges and takes responsibility for their actions. What Joseph does is simple: he "keeps score no more. As Walter Brueggemann puts it in his Genesis commentary, Joseph breaks from the past and invites his brothers to put that pitiful past behind them" as well. Joseph's decision to keep score no more creates the possibility of a new future for himself and his family. Otherwise, they would all still be controlled by and captive to the past.

When we understand these lessons, we realise how important forgiveness is and begin to grasp the deeper meaning of Jesus' words about loving our enemies.

Jesus asks three times, "What credit is it to you if you love those who love you, do good to those who do good to you, or lend to those who will give back to you?" The Greek word for "credit" is "charis," which is often translated as "grace." So, we could ask, "What grace is it to love only those who love us, do good only to those who are good to us, or lend to those who can repay us?"

Jesus calls His followers to “keep score no more,” meaning we should go beyond what is easy or expected and show grace to everyone, even those who do not return it.

Let me conclude. Forgiveness is not just a choice; it is a powerful act of grace that transforms us and our relationships. As we learn from Joseph's example, forgiveness requires us to move beyond the past and to “keep score no more,” allowing us to build a new future free from anger and resentment. Jesus teaches us that true grace is shown when we love not just those who love us back but also those who may never return that love. This is the challenge and the call—to forgive, to love unconditionally, and to follow Jesus' example of grace. May we choose to write our hurts in the sand and carve our blessings in stone, embracing the grace that God has shown us. May we embrace this calling, letting go of past hurts and offering grace to all, just as we have received grace from God. Amen.

Hymn StF 649 God! When human bonds are broken https://youtu.be/EaYtn-UCNnU?si=cyllo_vKrQ1vQYhv

God! When human bonds are broken
and we lack the love or skill
to restore the hope of healing,
give us grace and make us still.

Through that stillness, with your Spirit
come into our world of stress,
for the sake of Christ forgiving
all the failures we confess.

You in us are bruised and broken:
hear us as we seek release

from the pain of earlier living;
set us free and grant us peace.

Send us, God of new beginnings,
humbly hopeful into life;
use us as a means of blessing:
make us stronger, give us faith.

Give us faith to be more faithful,
give us hope to be more true,
give us love to go on learning:
God! Encourage and renew!

Prayer of Intercession & The Lord's Prayer

Loving and merciful God, We bring the needs of the world, the church, and our communities before you. Lord, we remember the people who suffer the impact of brokenness; Broken relationships, broken systems, and broken spirits. For those who live in the shadow of violence and war, For those burdened by poverty, injustice, and oppression, For those struggling with illness, loneliness, and grief. May your healing presence restore and renew them. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord, we remember the people who are seeking forgiveness— Those who long to be reconciled but fear rejection, Those weighed down by guilt and shame, Those struggling to forgive themselves or others. May your boundless grace remind us that in Christ, Forgiveness is freely given, and new beginnings are possible. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord, we pray for reconciliation in the church, the world, the community, and the home; Where division and discord have taken root, sow seeds of unity. Where misunderstandings have caused pain, bring healing words. Where injustice prevails, let your righteousness shine forth. Make us instruments of your peace, working for understanding and love in our families, our congregations, and among nations. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We offer these prayers in the name of Jesus Christ, Who taught us to pray, saying:

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, Forever and ever. Amen.

Hymn StF 615: Let love be real, in giving and receiving <https://youtu.be/tZUo4gGaq2c?si=DAFMQanIKZTf0cy2>

Let love be real, in giving and receiving,
without the need to manage and to own;
a haven free from posing and pretending,
where every weakness may be safely known.
Give me your hand, along the desert pathway,
give me your love wherever we may go:
as God loves us, so let us love each other,
with no demands, just open hands and space to grow.

Let love be real, not grasping or confining,
that strange embrace that holds yet sets us free;
that helps us face the risk of truly living,
and makes us brave to be what we might be.
Give me your strength when all my words are weakness,

give me your love in spite of all you know:
as God loves us, so let us love each other,
with no demands, just open hands and space to grow.

Let love be real, with no manipulation,
no secret wish to harness or control;
let us accept each other 's incompleteness,
and share the joy of learning to be whole.
Give me your hope through dreams and
disappointments,
give me your trust when all my failings show:
as God loves us, so let us love each other,
with no demands, just open hands and space to grow.

Blessing

May the grace of Jesus, who taught us to forgive and showed forgiveness even on the cross, encourage us.
May the love of God, who sent his Son to bring peace to the world, strengthen us.
May the Holy Spirit, who lives among us, guide and enlighten us each day.
And may we walk forward with courage, hope, and a heart open to God's transforming love. **Amen.**

Acknowledgement:

The Prayer of Adoration and Confession is adapted from *Companion to the Revised Common Lectionary* (2000) by Joyce Barrass, Epworth Press.